

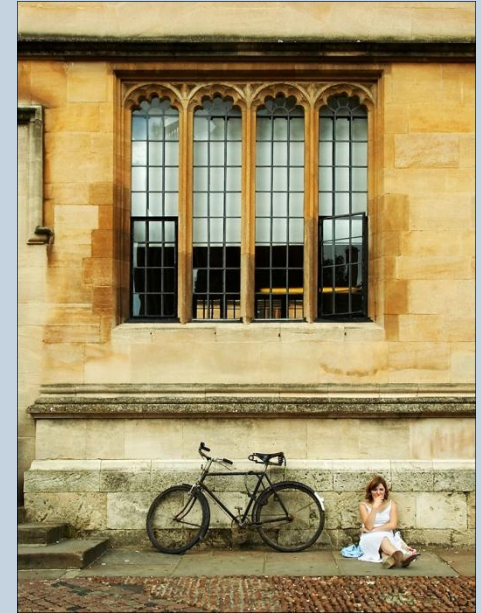
University of Oxford

Personal Statements & Teachers' References



Identifying Candidates

- Suitability for tutorial teaching system
 - Ability in & passion for subject
 - Enquiring / questioning mindset
 - Analytical / logical thinking style
 - Proven academic record at GCSE
 - Self-motivated & reads outside classroom
- Not about personality type / confidence
- Not looking for “all-rounders”



Personal Statements & References in Context

- Two of a large number of potential selection criteria:

Prior academic achievement

Predicted grades

Personal Statement

Teachers' reference

Pre-Interview tests


Written work

Written tests at Interview

Interview(s)



Personal Statements – what it is..

- Important part of the application procedure
 - Up to 4,000 characters (this includes spaces) or 47 lines of text (this includes blank lines)
 - Allows students to:
 - Discover if they truly love the subject
 - Explain why they want to study this course
 - Show their motivation and commitment
 - Make a good first impression
 - May provide content for discussion at interview
- 



and what it is not...

- a US college essay
- a test of 'fit' for an institution
- tailored to individual institutions
- an opportunity to over exaggerate
- a chance to plagiarise
- Something for parents to write

Structuring the Personal Statement

- I want to study...

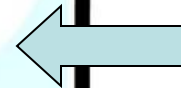
- I have read/watched/visited ...

- It was interesting because...



75%
Academic

25% Extra
Curricular



- In my spare time I play...

- I had some work experience at...

- I enjoy...

Examples of a Personal Statement

Questions for discussion:

- When is the statement read in the application process?
- Which sections may tutors pick up on?
- What sort of interview questions may be used as a result?
- How is context taken into account?



Teachers' Reference

Purpose:

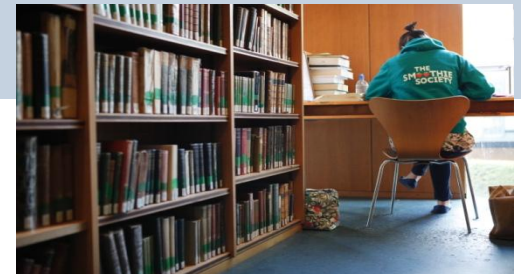
- Provides tutors with additional information on the **academic** suitability of a candidate to study their chosen subject.
- Great attention is placed upon the reference as it's provided by an educational professional who has known the candidate
- An assessment of the student's academic ability and potential for degree-level study.
- Read by at least three & sometimes as many ten tutors



Teachers' Reference

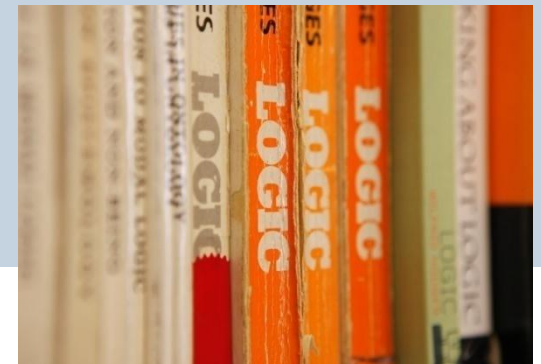
Predicted Exam Grades and School/College information:

- Details on how the school/college is determining what differentiates the candidate from their peers
- What makes the applicant a top level student can be helpful
- A short (two to three lines) paragraph about the school at the top of the reference may be important if there are particular issues that may have had a direct impact on the applicant e.g. high staff turnover in a subject
 - Hyperlink to the school website statement for more detail
- Strengths and achievements of the school the student attends have more limited value



Teachers' Reference: What do Admissions Tutors look for?

- Focus on the academic skills & experiences of the student
- Prominence to the subjects the student is undertaking that are most relevant to their chosen degree.
- Useful to receive comments from the most relevant **subject** teacher if written by the Head teacher or Guidance Counsellor
- Evidence of coping with a sustained workload and flourishing in an intense academic environment?



Teachers' Reference: What do Admissions Tutors look for?

- Predicted grades
- Areas of particular strength
- Relating to the relevant subject selection criteria is helpful
- How good candidate is relative to peers
- Contextual achievement
- Additional information only required if change of circumstances post-application



Examples of Teachers' References

Questions for discussion:

- When is the reference read in the application process?
- How is it used?
- What about mitigating circumstances?
- What isn't helpful to include?

